

The Masques of Shahrazad

9-14 March 2009

Evolution and Revolution of three generations of Iranian women artists

An exhibition featuring work by 28 Iranian women artists was held at The **Mall Galleries**, London, **9 – 14 March 2009**. Opening thirty years on from the upheavals of the Iranian Revolution, the **Masques of Shahrazad** was an opportunity to survey the Iranian artistic landscape of the last three decades. Over 300 guests turned up for the Private View, and the exhibition received great international media attention, being featured on Al Jazeera, BBC, Financial Times, Guardian, British Satellite News and The Times amongst others. The exhibition continues online at www.candlestargallery.com

This exhibition takes its cue and inspiration from Shahrazad, or Sheherazade, as the heroine of A Thousand and One Nights is often called. Like the legendary storyteller, these artists have had to adopt feints and stratagems, beguiling, charming and evading authority to sustain their artistic endeavours.

The Masques of Shahrazad includes work by celebrated Iranian artists such as Pariyoush Ganji, Maryam Javaheri, and Mansoureh Hosseini as well as Farideh Lashai, Golnaz Fathi, and Farah Ossouli, alongside younger artists who are beginning to register on the international art scene, namely Samira Alikhanzadeh, Shadi Ghadirian and Tahereh Samadi Tari.

The exhibition illustrates themes that range from time, a constant yet fragmented notion as depicted here, to politics. Each generation of artists deals with these themes in very different ways, but there is a shared sense of identity and heritage, expressed through reinterpretations of the Iranian creative vernacular.

Fariba Farshad, Director of Candlestar and joint curator of the exhibition, says: *'Gradually, Iran's female artists have engineered a shift in the limitations and barriers that constrained their predecessors, and have cleverly turned their weaknesses into strengths. Each of the three generations of artists we have selected for this show have had to evolve their own strategy to circumvent authority and express themselves, overcoming their fears and showing things that other people are afraid of expressing. Their works are sharp, subtle and perhaps subversive, without appearing to be any of these things; this is the genius of the masque. And a strange thing has happened: the decision to be an artist is no longer frowned upon. Many of the parents of this new generation of artists know what Shahrazad knew – that in the making of art there lies a path to a kind of liberation.'*

The exhibition is produced by Candlestar, in association with the Day Art Gallery, Tehran. All works are for sale.

Ends



Shadi Ghadirian, *Nil, Nil*, 2008



Samira Alikhanzadeh, *The Orange Racquet Team*, 2008



Golnaz Fathi, *Untitled*, 2008



Tahereh Samadi Tari, *Restless*, 2008




Mansoureh Hosseini, *Refuge to Light*, 1996

Notes to Editors

- Candlestar Ltd. is an international cultural agency specializing in production, collaboration and commissions for individual artists, designers and major educational and cultural institutions. For more information visit www.candlestar.co.uk
- Day Art Gallery is an internationally renowned art gallery based in Iran that focuses on contemporary Iranian visual arts, with a wide roster that includes Dariush Gharahzad and Maryam Zandi. For more information visit www.dayartgallery.com
- **Masques of Shahrazad Artists:** Mania Akbari, Azadeh Akhlaghi, Samira Alikhanzadeh, Nahid Arian, Bahar Behbahni, Fataneh Dadkhah, Fatemeh Emdadian, Yasmine Esfandiary, Golnaz Fathi, Pariyoush Ganji, Shadi Ghadirian, Yassi Golshani, Shahla Habibi, Mansoureh Hosseini, Maryam Javaheri, Shila Kalamian, Delaram Kia, Farideh Lashai, Farah Ossouli, Raziye Poursalari, Azadeh Razaghdoost, Tahereh Samadi Tari, Zahra Shahamatpour, Delbar Shahbaz, Maryam Shirinlou, Shideh Tami, Gizella Varga Sinai, Maryam Zandi.
- Candlestar and Day Art Gallery first collaborated on the Whispered Secrets Murmuring Dreams exhibition at the Mall Galleries in 2007.
- *"The masque has its origins in a folk tradition where masked players would unexpectedly call on a nobleman in his hall, dancing and bringing gifts on certain nights of the year, or celebrating dynastic occasions. Spectators were invited to join in the dancing. At the end, the players would take off their masks to reveal their identities."*

Anon

- *"[Shahrazad] had perused the books, annals and legends of preceding Kings, and the stories, examples and instances of by gone men and things; indeed it was said that she had collected a thousand books of histories relating to antique races and departed rulers. She had perused the works of the poets and knew them by heart; she had studied philosophy and the sciences, arts and accomplishments; and she was pleasant and polite, wise and witty, well read and well bred."*
Sir Richard Burton, The Book of One Thousand Nights and A Night (trans.1885)

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